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8289th meeting
Tuesday, 19 June 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Polyanskiy	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Lewicki
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: On behalf of the Secretary-General, I will devote my regular briefing today on the situation in the Middle East to presenting the sixth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). As Council members have already received the report, I will highlight some of the developments on the ground and the ongoing United Nations efforts in response. I invite Council members to note that all developments are taking place in the broader context of continued military occupation of the Palestinian territory, uncertainties about the peace process and the two-State solution, and instability and ongoing turmoil in the region.

As detailed in the report, no steps were taken during the reporting period to cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem as demanded by the resolution. Approximately 3,500 housing units in settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank were advanced, approved or tendered. One-third of those units are in settlements in outlying locations deep in the West Bank. Plans for 2,300 units were advanced in the approval process. Plans for 300 units reached final approval stage, and tenders were announced for approximately 900 units. As in the previous reporting period, no advancements, approvals or tenders were made in occupied East Jerusalem. Today, in fact, the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics released data on construction starts in West Bank Area C settlements during the first quarter of 2018 that saw the lowest quarterly figure in six years, that is 250 construction starts. The figure is significantly lower than the average monthly rate for 2017, which was 410 and 766 for 2016.

The reporting period also witnessed an overall increase in demolitions across Area C as compared to the previous period, albeit at the relatively low rate that has characterized the past year. The authorities demolished or seized at least 84 Palestinian-owned structures, resulting in the displacement of approximately 67 people and potentially affected the livelihoods of 4,500 others. I reiterate that all settlement activity is illegal under international law. It continues to undermine the practical prospects for establishing a viable Palestinian State and erodes remaining hopes for peace. I also reiterate the call by the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Development Activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to cancel plans to demolish Khan Al Ahmar-Abu Al Helu. Not only is the community at imminent risk of demolition, and displacement, but it also sets a significant precedent that may affect other Bedouin and herder communities in Area C.

The reporting period was characterized by high levels of violence, including rocket attacks from Gaza, as made clear in my recent briefings to the Council on 26 April (see S/PV.8244) and subsequently on 15 (see S/PV.8256), 23 (see S/PV.8265) and 30 May (see S/PV.8272). Since 30 March, during a series of protests in Gaza, 135 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have acknowledged that a number of their members were among those killed. Two Israeli soldiers were also injured during the protests, with at least five other people lightly injured as a result of rockets and mortars launched from Gaza. Under the cover of the protests, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other militants have engaged in violent and provocative acts. Hundreds have approached and attempted to breach the fence, burned tires, thrown rocks and fire bombs at Israeli forces, launched incendiary kites and laid improvised explosive devices at the fence. Palestinian protesters also have damaged and looted equipment and installations on the Gaza side of the border at the Kerem Shalom crossing.

We have extensively reported and underlined to the Council the respective responsibilities of parties involved in the latest round of violence. I want to again reiterate the call by the Secretary-General on all to unequivocally condemn in the strongest possible terms all actions that have brought us to this dangerous place

and led to the loss of so many lives in Gaza. Israel has a duty to protect its citizens, but it must do so while exercising maximum restraint in the use of live fire and not use lethal force except as a last resort against the imminent threat of death or serious injury. The actions of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other groups in Gaza put at risk not only the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike, but also efforts to ensure a livable future for the people of Gaza. They must prevent the launching of rockets and breaching of the fence.

The prevailing lack of decisive steps towards the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza, despite Egypt's best efforts to revive the process, is detrimental to Palestinian aspirations to statehood, contributes to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis and risks escalation. Furthermore, the recommendation by the Palestinian National Council to suspend key elements of the Oslo Accords, if implemented, would add to negative trends, thereby making a return to meaningful negotiations even more difficult. Last week, thousands of Palestinians demonstrated in Ramallah in solidarity with Gaza and its residents, while demanding an end to the measures imposed by the Palestinian Authority on Gaza and to the political division and lifting the debilitating closures. Palestinians have a right to freely express themselves, and the Palestinian Government has the responsibility to guarantee their exercise of that right in accordance with the basic law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Palestine acceded in April 2014. Unfortunately, on 13 June, Palestinian security forces prevented media from covering the protests and used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse protestors, while injuring and arresting dozens of protestors.

The reporting period also included several notable prosecutions by Israeli authorities of Palestinians and Israelis for membership in so-called terrorist cells. On 29 March, an Israeli court convicted an Israeli national of membership in a terrorist organization and participating in a price-tag attack against Palestinians. On 1 May, three Palestinians were indicted for planning shooting attacks in the West Bank under the guidance and sponsorship of Hamas. On 27 May, indictments were filed against Palestinians suspected of membership of a cell planning attacks against high-level targets, and, on 17 June, suspected Palestinian members of another cell, reportedly operated by Hamas, were indicted for preparing large bombing and suicide attacks in Israeli cities.

Provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric continued during the reporting period. On 30 April, during his opening speech at the Palestinian National Council, President Abbas made a series of anti-Semitic statements, which were widely condemned by the international community. At the height of the Gaza protests, a senior Hamas official called on protestors to "take down the border and tear out their Israelis hearts", which was one of several public calls by Hamas leaders inciting protestors to violence, including on social media. Meanwhile, Fatah's official social media pages continued to glorify the perpetrators of past terror attacks. Israeli officials also made provocative statements, including calls for the annexation of settlements, while denying that the Palestinian territories were occupied and openly rejecting the Palestinian right to statehood.

I continue to engage with all sides to advance proposals previously outlined in the Council that would consider prioritizing projects agreed for Gaza over the past years by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, enhance project management capacity on the ground, and strengthen coordination with Israeli, Palestinian, and Egyptian authorities. I would like to reiterate my appreciation to all counterparts for the goodwill and cooperation demonstrated thus far. Gaza remains an integral part of the future Palestinian State. I welcome Egypt's decision to open the Rafah border crossing, which has enabled approximately 14,000 Palestinians to enter Egypt, and over 3,300 to return to Gaza, and I hope that the security situation in Sinai will allow for the opening to be sustained. I also take this opportunity to reiterate my call on Hamas to provide comprehensive information pertaining to the Israeli nationals who have been held in Gaza, as required by international humanitarian law.

Facing an unprecedented shortfall of more than $250 million, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is weeks away from painful cuts to its emergency assistance for Gaza and elsewhere in the region. In Gaza itself, that would include a deferral of salaries to some members of its workforce in July and initiating the suspension of core operations in August. UNRWA and its stakeholders are making every effort to ensure that essential operations continue. To that end, a pledging conference will be held here in New York on 25 June.

In closing, I remain greatly concerned by the state of our collective efforts to advance peace, and I reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations to the Middle East Quartet, which remains the pre-eminent forum for discussing perspectives for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the interconnected nature of conflicts throughout the region and the iconic nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that can feed extremist narratives, creating the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations remains critical.

The Secretary-General has consistently spoken out against unilateral measures, which jeopardize the prospect of peace. In resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council also underlined that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. The need to reverse, or at the very least contain, the impact of negative trends, especially illegal settlement activity, violence and incitement, is critical not only to preserving hope for a meaningful return to the negotiating table, but also to preventing the escalation of broader regional tensions. I urge key regional and international partners to re-engage and remain steadfast in the pursuit of ending the occupation and realizing the two-State solution in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.